

Dear Readers,

This is the first in a series of newsletters that you will receive from the BLM about its plans to protect and conserve the Great Basin sagebrush steppe ecosystem across the Western US. This newsletter provides an overview of the programmatic effort, how to get involved, including a schedule of public meetings, as well as where and how to submit comments.

How to Get Involved

Get on the mailing list by sending a request to GRSG_PEIS@blm.gov

Visit the Project Web site at: <https://go.usa.gov/xnQcG>

Attend public meetings: Public meetings will be held in 15 cities across the Great Basin Region. See website for schedule.

Submit comments at a public meeting or via one of the methods listed below. Comments will be considered as part of the scoping process until February 20, 2018 or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. You can submit comments even if you haven't attended a public meeting.

E-mail: GRSG_PEIS@blm.gov
Fax: 208-373-3805
US Mail: Jonathan Beck, BLM Idaho State Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709



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Great Basin Ecosystem Strategy



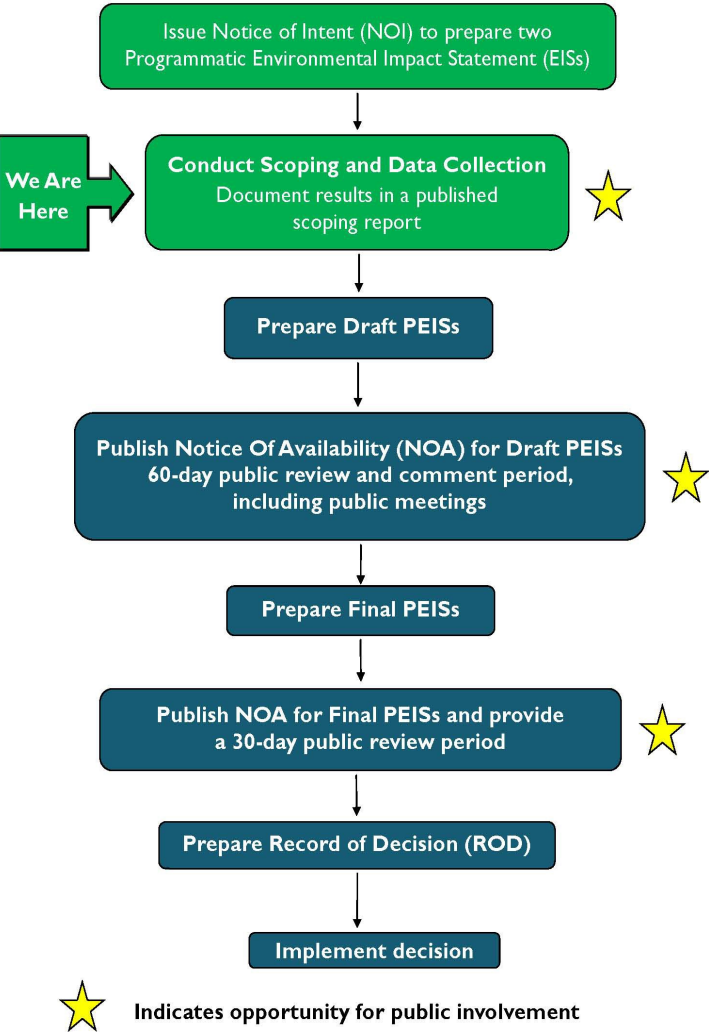
BLM Initiates Two Programmatic Efforts to Improve the Great Basin Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem

Issue No. 1, January 2018

The BLM, as lead agency, is preparing two regionally focused, landscape-scale, programmatic environmental impact statements (PEISs) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). One PEIS will focus on the construction of fuel breaks and the other PEIS will focus on hazardous fuels reduction and rangeland restoration. The PEISs would evaluate conditions under which a comprehensive system of fuel breaks, hazardous fuels reductions, and rangeland restoration tools and techniques could be implemented within the Great Basin region to protect and restore the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, thereby, benefitting users of this ecosystem. The project area includes portions of Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Utah.

BLM is proposing to construct a system of fuel breaks across the Great Basin in order to further protect life and property, and to sustain its multiple-use public lands. These fuel breaks would provide a proactive approach by which the BLM could reduce the number of acres burned annually, and decrease loss of life and property, increase multiple-use opportunities, and protect habitat. BLM is also proposing hazardous fuels reduction and rangeland restoration to protect and conserve the sagebrush steppe ecosystem so that it is capable of delivering sustainable goods and services, such as healthy rangelands, clean water, and recreational opportunities, while at the same time conserving and protecting wildlife and their natural surroundings.

Large-scale wildfires, particularly in sagebrush steppe ecosystems, have increased exponentially throughout the Western US in recent years. These large-scale fires have resulted in increased costs, injuries and fatalities within the firefighting community, as well as destruction of private property, habitat loss for a variety of species, and subsequent loss of beneficial uses of those lands for many years post-fire. While fire is an important part of the ecology of sagebrush steppe habitats, frequent large-scale wildfires are a leading cause of sagebrush loss and increasing spread of annual invasive grasses, primarily cheatgrass. Additionally, encroachment of pinyon-juniper into sagebrush steppe habitats has further reduced the quality and functionality of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Appropriately installed and maintained fuel breaks and strategic hazardous fuels reduction would



reduce vegetation continuity and aid in suppression opportunities, thereby reducing risks to firefighters, decreasing fire size and acres burned annually, improving or restoring the ecosystem, and protecting our rangeland restoration investments, leading to a sustained and economically viable ecosystem.

The PEISs would aid in meeting provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and the objectives and goals as outlined in the relevant land use plans, the Greater Sage-Grouse Wildfire, Invasive Annual Grasses, and Conifer Expansion Assessments, as well as Secretarial Order 3336 (Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM will seek public and interagency input to identify issues to



Sagebrush ecosystem

address in the PEISs and coordinate with other federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies in preparing the PEISs.

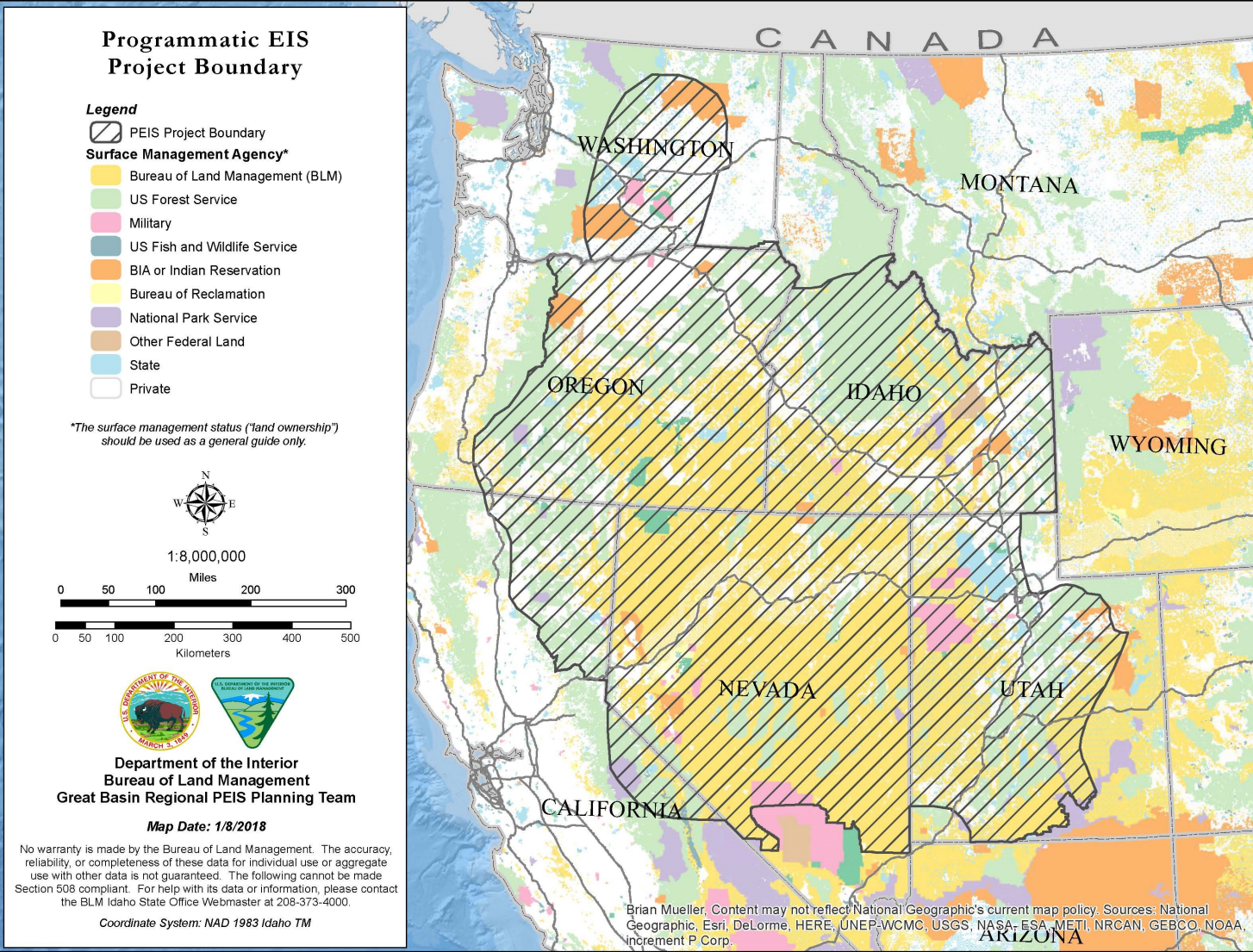
The BLM has assembled two Regional Support Teams based in Boise and Reno to assist with this endeavor. The teams are available to assist with project needs region-wide, though the closest resources or local expertise will generally be used to meet outreach needs.

The BLM is proposing this effort to protect and conserve the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, its values, and associated wildlife and their habitat. The intent of this newsletter is to provide background information and guidance on how to become involved and remain involved throughout the process.

To initiate this process, BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on December 22, 2017, announcing the beginning of a scoping period to solicit public comments and identify issues. A diagram of the process is located on the first page.

Next Steps

As a public Agency we rely on input concerning local issues, concerns, and values in order to develop flexible, relevant, and usable tools that can aid in a swifter implementation of future projects. The BLM greatly appreciates your interest, participation, and partnership in this process.



During this initial step of the PEIS process, BLM would like to get your input on issues, concerns, or recommendations for the projects. As part of this 60-day scoping period, the BLM will host 15 scoping meetings across six states.

You may submit comments at the meetings, via email or mail, or through the project website at any time during the scoping period. The project website will accept comments for both PEISs.

A Scoping Report will summarize all of the public input that was received for each PEIS and will be made available on the project website. The Regional Support Teams will then incorporate any public input, as appropriate under NEPA, into the PEISs. When BLM releases the Draft PEISs, you will have another opportunity to comment, along with being able to review the documents. With that feedback, BLM will then develop two Final PEISs.



Public Meetings Scheduled for Winter 2018

To participate in the process, please visit the project website (<https://go.usa.gov/xnQcG>) and attend the public scoping and informational meetings to learn more about the projects, speak with BLM staff, view maps, and submit comments. Meeting times and locations will be posted on the project website and announced through local media. All meetings will include informational materials and an opportunity to submit comments. Presentation materials will be on display throughout the meeting and available on the project website.

California

- Susanville

Idaho

- Boise
- Twin Falls
- Idaho Falls

Nevada

- Reno
- Elko
- Ely

Oregon

- Burns
- Lakeview

Utah

- Salt Lake City
- Snowville
- Cedar City
- Vernal

Washington

- Moses Lake